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# Alumni unite to celebrate “a wonderful camaraderie”

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*Illinois Wesleyan University*, [iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu)

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## Alumni unite to celebrate “a wonderful camaraderie”



**University President Richard Wilson and former President Robert Eckley greet the Crileys during a reception this past fall. (Photo by Marc Featherly)**

Ann (Feurer) Travelstead '72 will never forget the wake-up call she received when she almost slept through her 8 a.m. embryology exam.

“I just remember hearing the phone ring in my dorm room at Gulick and looking at the clock,” she recalled. Horrified to discover that it was 8:10, she picked up the phone and heard Bruce Criley’s voice on the other end, “asking me if I had forgotten that the embryology exam had started at 8 a.m.”

Travelstead managed to make it to the exam with half an hour to spare and even completed the test. “How many other schools have professors that would have taken the time to go to the phone and call a missing student?” Travelstead asks. “Not too many, I would venture to guess.”

This past fall, University alumni who majored in biology and chemistry shared their memories at a symposium in honor of Bruce and Norma Criley. Many former students gave short lectures about their areas of expertise, and the Crileys also gave a talk based on their experiences teaching undergraduate biology. Even more alumni, including Travelstead, contributed stories and photos to a scrapbook presented to the Crileys at the event.

Claire (Hagemann) Parmenter '05 fondly remembered the time she spent as a teaching assistant for Norma Criley’s human anatomy and physiology course.

“Every week we would crowd around a single lab table, and Dr. Criley would go through all of the slides, specimens or procedures that we would need to know for the upcoming week,” she wrote in her tribute. “We all felt such wonderful camaraderie, and I don’t believe that a week went by that we did not pick up some new bit of information as Dr. Criley shared from her vast wealth of knowledge.”

Neurosurgeon Ann Stroink '76 recalled how “one crisp, sunny, September morning in 1975, Dr. [Bruce] Criley sought me out at the library to inform me that I had received early acceptance to the Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine. His delight in telling me stayed with me to this day.” Both Crileys were known for helping maintain the high levels of acceptance for Illinois Wesleyan students into medical schools.

Although many of Bruce Criley's former students found him tough, even intimidating, they also remembered him as being fair and honest. George Tomecki '96 — now a family physician practicing in Brookfield, Ill. — was a sophomore when Criley told him that he probably wouldn't be able to get into medical school with his current grades. "This conversation became my motivation to prove him wrong," Tomecki wrote.

By his junior year, Tomecki was a straight-A student. He assumed that Criley wasn't aware of his hard work, but learned that wasn't the case. "I was walking down the hall of the old science building and Dr. Criley appeared out of nowhere and jokingly said, 'You coming down to my office to tell me about your grades?' Obviously, he was actually taking more of an interest in my progress than he would let on."

Criley arranged for Tomecki to serve an externship with a local physician and wrote recommendations for his medical school applications. "That's when I realized that he was actually rooting for me to achieve my goal." Tomecki went on to SIU School of Medicine and was inducted into the AOA Medical Society, representing the top 10 percent of graduating medical students across the country.

"I love seeing former students," says Bruce. "Some will look at me and say, 'You remember me from the '70s?' And I will give them some little anecdote about their lives to let them know I do. Of course, some will avoid asking me that question because they know I do remember," he adds with a laugh.

"That is one of the pleasures of teaching," says Norma, "keeping in touch with the students and seeing what they accomplish."